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Gudrun Pausewang, Patricia Crampton (Translation)

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Alice is eleven years old, and it is wartime. She is on a train with no seats, no lights, no sanitary facilities. Her parents and her grandmother are missing, and Alice doesn't know where she is going. Maybe she will get to play outside again, maybe she will see her parents. But as the train rolls on, Alice begins to realize that just when you think things can't possibly get any worse, they do.

The Final Journey Details

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From Reader Review The Final Journey for online ebook

Emma says

Captures the mind, for the state of someone unknowingly going to her death. The story has a beginning, being imprisoned in a train, with many others--men, women, of all ages, including a pregnant woman--on the way somewhere, the narrator--Anna--believes is a place to work for the war: "I will work hard." But with every passing minute, she is unraveling the missing pieces, to put together the purpose of the journey. She learns about each passenger, taking a particular liking to a man named Paul, who acts as a natural leader, to have everyone working together. A former show girl, who sings to them, one of her numbers. A boy, David and his brother eager to peak out through the only place where one can see out of the cattle truck, to see what is going on, in the outside world: guards marching around the train station, gathering everyone to put in the cattle car on the train. More people from other trains, being loaded up, and finally, the "sliding-door(s) of the railway truck clos[ing] with a deafening clang" (p 1)

Each passenger finds a way to work together, sharing space, and creating a corner to use for a bathroom. Until the several days journey was causing some of the "muck" to slide over, to other parts, on people, and luggage.

They are only given kind of crackers or biscuits to eat, and go without food or drink for several days. Alice's grandfather had brought with them a thermos, and they soon have nothing left of that too.

The passengers demand to stop for water, and it does, allowing for a few of the passengers to get water, from a lake, they have stopped by: "Get on then, but quick. And take both buckets, man. If you're doing it, do it properly!"

And soon the "bathroom corner" is gone, and the mess of it all spreading around to Alice's and everyone's horror.

I am giving too much away now; sorry, everyone, who may read this. But I think the whole story is captured well, with the quote from a reviewer/editor, "The brutal message of Pausewang's novel lingers long after the last agonizing pages are closed" (Kirkus, Reviews).

Hosea Karr says

The Final Journey
By Gudrun Pausewang

The final Journey's genre is juvenile fiction based on historical events. The novel was took place during World War II (1939 – 1945) in Auschwitz Easter Europe. Gudrun Pausewang born in March 3 1928 at Germany, and she is a German writer for children and teens. Gudrun Pausewang wrote 86 novels, and The Final Journey is one of them. She wrote this novel because she was there during that time period, and she believe lots of Jewish children desert better than what just happen to them.

The brutal message of The Final Journey by Pausewang is it was merciless to be Jewish During this time period, because it was during World War II, and the Jewish Holocaust. There were brutal forms of opposition where six million Jews died in what has become known as the Holocaust people with disabilities and dissidents of all kinds.

The Final Journey is about eleven years old girl name Alice, during World War II. Alice is a young Jewish

girl doesn't know anything outside her house forced to get in a train with her grandfather to unknown destination. Alone the way, she forced to come to grips with death, and she learns new things that she too young to know. However she wants to works hard to fit in with the group. This book would be a preface read for young girls, for them to know how some girls have to go to during the holocaust.

This book very heart wrenching book, and in some how when I'm reading it kind of connect to my life litter bit. How she has to travel to another place and don't know any body on the way beside her family it remind me of when I come to United States.

Luke says

The author's purpose in writing this book was to show the true horrors of Hitler and the Nazi's (Yes, it's a book about the Nazi's treatment to Jews). The author did accomplish that purpose. The target audience in the book is the people who are reading it. The facts shared about how the Germans treated Jews are extremely accurate. The book was a bit interesting and it held my attention. It could be an interesting addition to libraries, especially if people want to learn about the cruelty of Hitler. There are no maps, or any sort of illustration, just, words. The one thing that makes the book worthwhile is how it really describes in detail about how bad Hitler and his racist German treated Jews, and just, slaughters them. The book is not a biography, or autobiography, but it is a very emotional book, with very many emotional moments. Towards the end, it got a bit more interesting, but left on a cliffhanger. There is not a glossary, for any words that may be hard for the reader to understand, nor an index to find certain words on. And there was no table of contents. Overall, The Final Journey was a decent book. Not the best, but not the worst.

Lori says

There are so many books on the Holocaust and written in so many different ways. This book takes that very short time span it took to transport a group of Jews from their home by train to Auschwitz. It moves a little slow but it adds to the discomfort you are feeling as you relive those long grueling hours they spent packed in train cars meant for transporting cattle. You feel their hunger, their pain, their discomfort, their confusion and fear and wonder about what lies ahead for them once they arrive at their destination. When the trip finally comes to an end and they think their basic needs will be met with a shower and hot coffee they are separated; able bodied workers to the right, women and children to the left. We all know the ending from here. I just wish I could have that moment back and let it all be a bad dream and watch Alice grow up and marry Paul, and be reunited with her family. The reality is too much grief for one person to bear.

Mary-Megan says

This novel was written twenty years ago in German. A few years later it was translated to English and is a timeless tale of a young girl's journey during the Holocaust.

The novel takes place almost entirely on a train. Alice is an eleven-year-old Jew who was taken from her home with her grandfather and grandmother. Her mother and father had already left and were at a "dentist

clinic." She believes that she is going to join them in the east. Forty-nine people are crammed in the cattle car with no bathroom and no seats and no idea where they are going. As they pass station after station without stopping and without being given water, the reality of their situation slowly worsens. The naive Alice soon learns the truth that her loved ones tried to protect her from and begins to connect the dots of her memories living in the basement. As the journey comes to a close, even those who seem to know it all don't really know everything.

This novel about the Holocaust only touches briefly on the horrors that Jews and others faced - but that doesn't make it any less powerful. There isn't the excessive suffering and withering away that one usually reads about - the utter hopelessness - but there is the unknown future that hangs over everyone. It captures the complete disregard for human life these victims suffered and how, despite loss, one needs to carry on and how people can come together in the face of tragedy. The ending itself, while somewhat ambiguous for someone unfamiliar with the history, is equally haunting given the characters' naivety.

While this book might not talk about all of the experiences one faced during the Holocaust, it shows the reality that not many people made it beyond that final train journey. It is filled with characters you care about and, while some may not be as developed or memorable, you worry about their fates. Overall, this is a haunting journey for both reader and character.

Meaghan says

There are a lot of books on the Holocaust but not many of them talk in detail about the actual journeys to the camps, the trains. This book, which is about as low-key as it can be given the topic, is about a twelve-year-old girl, Alice, being deported to Auschwitz, and almost the entire story takes place in the cattle car, packed in with dozens of other miserable Jews. The grimness and inhumanity of the surroundings is quite evident. The wretched people quickly fill their waste bucket and finally just eliminate in a corner, and eventually the whole car floods. A nice young man is shot to death when he tries to escape. Although it's not explicitly stated, Alice is sent to certain death in the last chapter of the book. However, more important is the protagonist's journey of self-discovery.

As the train rolls onward to its destination, so does Alice learn more and more things about her life that she never knew. Extremely naive in the beginning -- she was kept shut away by her loving grandfather and was completely unaware of the persecutions and the danger surrounding her -- Alice quickly wises up and realizes the (almost) entire truth of the situation. She begins to menstruate during the last pages, a symbol of her new emotional maturity.

Children would appreciate this book and I don't think it's too graphic for them, but adults will also appreciate it for the many layers of meaning in the story.

Eva Leger says

This is one of the very few books, non-fiction or otherwise, on this subject that I'd recommend to younger people. Even though the majority of this book details the train ride Alice takes to Auschwitz there is still much tragedy involved as is to be expected. But it's written in a way that can be handled by young people I

think. Maybe because instead of putting it out there very plainly it all goes "through" Alice. That may be why I feel this way.

I'm really surprised at this book to be honest. I read it ~ to be very honest ~ because it's missing it's dust jacket and I wanted it off my bookshelf. (My OCD thank you very much.) I was surprised at how well it flowed. As astonishing as Alice's experiences are it can be handled by someone younger.

This is also slim enough that someone younger may not be overwhelmed which is always a good thing.

Wyatt C says

The book is kind of all over the place in the beginning but the more you read the more understanding it gets. Anyways the plot is that Alice (the main character) is a quarter Jewish and is being sent to a work camp with her grandpa that served in WW1 under Germany. He tells Alice lies so she doesn't freak out. She finds out and yells at her grandfather and he dies from the guilt and the fact that he has some sort of disease that he has contracted on the prison truck. The book ends in a "shower room" in Auschwitz.

There are many figurative devices in Gudrun Pausewang's The Final Journey. First is imagery:"she washed her hands in the equally filthy wash-basin..."(22). Another example of imagery is:"something flat, large and unwieldy was stuck at the bottom of the bag: the family tree."(140-141) The next figurative language is Onomatopoeia:"Rat-tat-tat, rat-tat-tat."(16) Next is simile:"moving his hand through the air like an aeroplane."(115) After simile, there is personification:"The train slowed down, with much creaking, rattling and screeching..."(90)

My opinion of this book is low. It took a little time to get started by that I mean it took half of the book to understand what is happening. I was confused when she was having flashbacks vs. when she was on the train.

Lisa Vegan says

This is a grim, brutal, and heartbreaking book. It's told from the point of view of a young eleven-year-old Jewish girl in Germany during the Nazi era, who is on a train to who knows where.

It's exceptionally well written and an engrossing story. All the characters seemed very real.

I thought the author got it just right in the depiction of a child who's been lied to and deceived, knows something is not quite right but is trusting, and who inevitably finds out the truth, or in this case, something close to the truth. That aspect in particular really resonated with me. At first I had a difficult time believing in the girl's naiveté, but then it did seem genuine and believable.

I wouldn't suggest this book as an introduction to the Nazi holocaust. There is an short afterword that gives pertinent information, but I think I enjoyed this book more because I knew what was going on every step of the way. But, maybe that's just me.

I wouldn't recommend this for anyone younger than eleven and that would be too young for some readers. I consider this an adult/young adult book, not a children's book.

To all potential readers: Do not plan to snack/eat while reading this. Seriously!

Stacy Slater says

The Holocaust is an all-too-popular subject for young adult literature, so it was with reluctance that I opened this book. Unlike so many books in this genre, there are no real heroes, no noble acts, and no redemption in this claustrophobic tale first published in Germany. Instead, this short novel focuses on the tedium, uncertainty, and unease in one railway car full of Jews making the forced journey to Auschwitz.

Alice, the central character, is nearly twelve, but has lived such a sheltered life that she seems much younger. Despite hiding in a basement for more than two years, she knows nothing of the war or the atrocities being committed. Her own parents disappeared in the dark of night, but her grandparents reassured her that it was only because her mother needed emergency dental care, which the naive child believed. And so Alice finds herself in a herd of humanity, heading east, hoping to be reunited with her parents. Over the course of the brief journey her illusions are shattered as she witnesses death (including her own grandfather's), birth, and the entire spectrum of human emotions. When the torture of the journey is finally over, she is only too relieved to be offered the opportunity to shower.

Unlike other YA novels about the Holocaust, (Number the Stars, for one), that remain somewhat removed from the actual details of the tragedy, Pausewang's work wallows in the repetitive, mundane trivia of the journey. Most of the passengers in the railway car are neither horrible nor heroic, but are instead preoccupied with bodily functions normally kept private. The two corpses occupying valuable space in the car are treated in the same matter-of-fact style, further emphasizing the dehumanizing effects of the journey. The birth of a baby in the midst of such depression should have been cause for celebration, but the assorted travelers cannot find enough hope in their hearts to rejoice. It is only the false promise of a shower and hot coffee that causes some to lift their heads in anticipation, making the final, inevitable conclusion that much more poignant.

Due to explicit language and uncomfortable situations, The Final Journey is probably best suited for older middle school and high school readers. I would proceed with caution before using with a fifth or sixth grade class.

Michael Gialloreto says

I read the book The Final Journey by Gudrun Pausewang. This book was about a young Jewish girl named Alice. Alice had to stay locked in her grandparents basement after the death of her parents. One day in the middle of the night two Nazi officers came to Alice's grandparents house and told them to pack. Alice was unaware of what was going on because nobody told her anything about the war or what was going on. Alice and her grandmother were put on a pitch black breathless train. She goes through many events that lead her to eventually find out what is going on. When everyone gets off the train they are put into a concentration camp. Everyone gets put into a gas chamber and dies. I would recommend this book to people who are looking for a background of where the prisoners come from and what they have to go through.

Ana says

A close account of what a Jewish child might have gone through in the Holocaust, written from a hopeless

perspective of someone who doesn't survive. Not heavy to read, and not necessarily bringing any new information, but rather emotional charge and moral questions.

Claire says

My school librarian saw that I was reading Night by Elie Wiesel and recommended The Final Journey to me. She'd recently read this book and told me that I would "need some tissues". (That was true).

Anyways, I see this book as somewhat of a continuation of the Diary of Anne Frank, this is the part that you don't get to hear about. I do have an interest in WWII history but am in no way an expert on it, so I couldn't tell you exactly how accurate this story was, but I felt that it did a good job of portraying the horror of the Holocaust.

One thing I struggled with while reading this book was my feelings for Alice's grandpa I tried to look at him in a positive light, but after all he hid from Alice and couldn't help but feel spiteful towards him, (view spoiler)

Cynthia Oh says

The Final Journey by Gudrun Pausewang takes place in a train that is on its way to concentration camp during World War 2. Alice, a 11 year old, naive Jewish girl, just wants to get off this train to meet her family. However, the reader knows that Alice and her grandfather are being sent away to become part of the concentration camp. The author used dramatic irony as a very good tool there. The readers knew exactly what was going on, while Alice didn't. This made readers like me feel pity and sympathy for Alice who obviously waited death. The general plot of the story is very depressing for it doesn't end with a happy ending. It shows how sad the lives of the Jews were during the Holocaust and how much they suffered. The beginning of the plot is a bit slow and sticks mainly to describing the situation in the train. However, the story progresses as readers meet new characters on the train and events like, begging for water, death, and birth to a baby happens. After these events, the story does progress a bit but it still takes on quite a simple pace. It doesn't have any dramatic climaxes, other than the death that awaits the Jews. Although the general plot was not very dramatic, the book kept me turning pages because of its uniqueness. There are so many books out there that have been based on World War 2 and the Holocaust, but this one was so different from them all. It took on the perspective of people who suffered on the way to concentration camp, knowing that death awaited them. In addition, the life of Jews which had no hope and joy taught me to be more thankful with everything that I live with and the horrors of WW2. One aspect that I didn't enjoy of the book was the amount of tragedy. The tragedy of the book was a very important element in keeping the book more entertaining, but as someone who likes to enjoy the bright side and always has hope, the depression in the book was a bit unpleasing to me. The Final Journey is a book that ends with death and shows readers the tragedy of the Jews, but taught me that my life I have right now is truly blessed and I'm so lucky to be where I am right now. In conclusion, I really enjoyed reading this unique take on the tragedies of the Jews and I learned a lot about being thankfulness.

Ian G says

such a sad book !!!!! :(
